

THE MORAL PURPOSE OF DEFOE'S ROYAL HISTORIES:  
COLONEL JACK, MOLL FLANDERS, CAPTAIN SINGLETON,  
THE FORTUNATE MISFRESS (BOXANA)

by

CLAYTON LOUIS KAUFF

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Major Professor

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A distinctive dogma permeates Daniel Defoe's rogue histories (Colonel Jack, Captain Singleton, Moll Flanders, and Roxana): men should be "genteel." For Defoe's characters the definition of that term varied as they matured. However, the term generally connoted financial security, middle-class respectability, and the graces of the nobility in addition to repentance after retirement. Defoe apparently believed that if this idea was employed as a social force, it would stimulate the development and growth of the best institutions of society. In fact, the results would be Utopian if men understood and followed the steps in attaining this goal: education and subsequent motivation, attainment of economic stability, and acquisition of genteel refinements while one atoned for the necessary business vices of yesteryear. Then England would be strong because her people would be financially solvent, socially accomplished, and spiritually absolved.

Defoe introduced the model for middle-class aspirants in an extremely unlikely setting, the jungles of Africa. Singleton and his compatriots discovered this gentleman accidentally as they pushed through central Africa. Bob immediately perceived that the man was "a Gentleman, not an ordinary bred Fellow, Seaman, or labouring Man; this showed in his Behaviour... and in spite of all the Disadvantages of his miserable Circumstance [his inability to leave, large sun blisters on his white skin, and an absence of clothing]" (p. 149). But his actions and attainments were exemplary: "his Behaviour the most courteous and endearing I ever saw in any Man whatever, and most evident Tokens of a mannerly well-bred Person, appeared in all things he did or said...." In addition, he "was a Scholar, and a Mathematician" and spoke Portuguese, Latin,

French, and Italian (p. 149). His education was not confined to books:

What was important ... was that this man's conduct and manner were such that, despite his rude and 'stark naked' state, he could charm a ruthless band of pirates in the steaming jungles of Africa; and his knowledge and learning were such that, despite the disadvantages of being without books or supplies, he could subsist more than adequately by his practical knowledge .... His knowledge is more of the world than of the study: he knows where to find gold or water, how to travel through the jungle; in short, he proves himself as adept at survival among the aborigine Tradersmen as at the leadership among the pirates.<sup>1</sup>

His experiences did not provide a model, but his achievement illustrated the strength of true gentility, the ability not only to survive but also to be successful. The reader never hears the man's name or his origins. But they are unimportant. What does matter is that this genuine middle-class gentleman, because of his education, could survive the severest of tests and emerge wealthy. Singleton left him in Africa, ready for social intercourse, retirement, and repentance.

When the rogues matured, they could recognize the ideal and could understand how to attain it, but their youthful interpretations were not precise. Horrified by the prospect of being "put out to service," young Moll Flanders "cry'd heartily" and "roar'd out" that she wanted to be a gentlewoman (I, 5). Foreshadowing her future career, Moll referred ironically to a particular seamstress in the community who did "not go to Service nor do House-Work" and proclaimed that she would be "such a Gentlewoman as that" (I, 8). The ladies of the town laughed uproariously, for the woman Moll referred to was "a Person of ill Fame, and has had two Bastards" (I, 8). Moll was not old enough to understand the sexual deviation. What she "understood by being a Gentlewoman, was to be able to Work for myself, and get enough to keep me without going to Service ..." (I, 7). Throughout a long career of prostitution

and thievery Moll never failed to provide her own livelihood. But in time she discovered that her earliest wish, economic security, was only the first attainment of a gentlewoman.

Colonel Jack's earliest notions about gentility were equally vague. His nurse's assurance that he was well born prompted his "strange original Notion ... [of] being a Gentleman" (I, 71), a notion which enabled him to transcend the coarseness of his poverty-stricken peers. An experience at the glasshouse further defined his early notions: A well-dressed gentleman came to the glasshouse one day to buy some bottles. While he was bargaining for them, "he swore most horrible Oaths at every two or three Words." Finally the proprietor reproved him, reminding him that "a Man of Breeding" ought to disdain cursing because he "know[s] better, and ... [is] taught better ...." He concluded his advice by admonishing the swearer, "When you are tempted to swear, always ask your self ... Does this become me as a Gentleman?" Jack's "Blood run Chill" in his veins "when he heard that Swearing was only fit for such as we [the poor boys] were ...." As a result, "... from that Time forward ... [he] never had the least Inclination to swearing or ill Words ..." (I, 71-2). Jack remembered that the glassmaker had also said "That to be a Gentleman was to be an Honest Man, that without Honesty, human Nature was sunk and degenerated; the Gentleman lost all the dignity of his Birth, and plac'd himself even below an Honest Beggar ..." (I, 137). Only knowing that proper speech and honesty were attributes of "the refined," adolescent Jack cultivated these qualities. His strange early notion provided the impetus; the glasshouse owner helped to shape the ambition; and in time he attained the primary status of a gentleman, "a settled Family Life ...

the Thing I loved..." (II, 61).

Unlike Moll and Jack, Bob Singleton did not find any of the gentry with whom he could identify during his early years. Nevertheless, as a basically good-natured youth, he "entertained ... a settled Abhorrence of the abandon'd Vileness" of the men he sailed with (p. 8). The ship's Gunner taught him the rudiments of mathematics and geography, but many years elapsed before Bob met William Walter, the Quaker who shaped his aspirations in the proper, middle-class, genteel mold.

Roxana began at the level the other characters aspired to. Roxana's early marriage provided her with temporary security and social status. But her husband wasted his substance and then deserted the family. During the next two years Roxana expended her meager resources, pawned the furniture, and sent her children to reluctant relatives. Soon she would have starved. But a "charitable" landlord discovered her plight, fed her, and bedded her. Her subsequent rise resembled Moll's: both sold their virtue to obtain security. Unlike Moll, Roxana developed a taste for something higher than a settled and genteel way of life. Her ambition, to be a member of the titled aristocracy, eventually set her apart from the other rogues, and her end was not prosperous repentance but "a dreadful Course of Calamities..." (II, 160).

For Defoe aristocracy and gentility were not synonymous. (Even when he used the term gentility to describe the upper class, he recognized a distinct difference between the aristocratic appearance of wealth and the middle-class gentry's possession of wealth.) His heroes and heroines sought the grace of the nobility but the wealth and common sense of the middle class. A title "cou'd not give Principles of Honour, they must



come by Birth and Blood... however, Titles sometimes assist to elevate the soul, and to infuse generous Principles into the Mind, and especially, where there was a good Foundation laid in the Persons..." (*Roxana*, II, 51-2). Roxana clearly did not want the title to "infuse Principles"; instead, she desired the position because the subsequent recognition would feed her vanity. This was not a goal Defoe could admire. Money was the main thing, and the middle class offered the greatest opportunity, almost the only opportunity, to acquire this necessary commodity. If Roxana did not primarily want the graces of the nobility, she desired a senseless goal because the tradesmen, by virtue of their wealth, would be the upper class of the future:

[Defoe] saw in trade a natural supremacy over the rents and produce of the landed estates; it was only a matter of time before England's national economy would be converted from that of a primarily agrarian society, as represented by the Tory landed gentry, to a dominantly mercantile society, as represented by the men of industry and trade ....<sup>2</sup>

A sensible Englishman (or Englishwoman) would do the best he could with what he had and with what he was, and he would not aspire to an unnatural position: "Fixed in the scale of being as a creature of passions as well as reason, man's best chance of obtaining happiness was to know himself and make some compromise with his limitations."<sup>3</sup>

Those individuals who tried to ape the nobility learned that such strivings were not only foolish but futile. The tradesman-sportsman illustrated the point most fully. And Roxana's first husband was Defoe's fictionalized illustration of this error. He "kept his Horses and Men, rode every Day out to the Forest a-hunting, and ... the money decreas'd apace ... he kept no valuable Company neither; but generally with Huntsmen and Horse-Courers..." (I, 8). As a result of hunting expenditures,

he eventually had to sell the brewery he inherited. He spent that money also, and then deserted Roxana and his children. In The Complete English Tradesman Defoe discussed this error:

When I see young shopkeepers keep horses, ride a hunting, learn dog-language, and keep the sportsman's brogue upon their tongues, I am always afraid for them (I, 98).

To gentlemen of fortunes and estates, who are born to large possessions, 'tis certainly lawful to spend their spare hours on horseback with their hounds or hawks, pursuing their game... [To] the prudent tradesman ... nothing of pleasure or diversion can be innocent to him, whatever it may be to another, if it injures his business, if it takes either his time, or his mind, or his delight, or his attendance from his business (I, 104-5).

Similarly, Moll's gentleman-tradesman, "this amphibious Creature," "this Land-water-thing" had "a mind to look like Quality...." One could rightly say that "he valued nothing of Expense... [and] in about two years and a Quarter he Broke..." (I, 59-61). He did not waste his entire substance on hunting, but he was adept at other means of waste. Moll soon found men who wanted to have the appearance of gentility before they had sufficient wealth. They were guilty "of that empty and meanest kind of pride, called imitation, viz., to look like gentry" (Complete English Tradesman, I, 118).

Colonel Jack encountered another sham, the gentlemen-thief. Will, a would-be comrade of Jack, provided the example. This thief and his gang aroused Jack's suspicions immediately by their damning, swearing, and threatening murder (I, 81). But when they robbed an impoverished elderly lady, Jack remembered the glass house owner's injunction, and "how it came into ... [his] Head with a double Force, that this was the High Road to the Devil, and that certainly this was not the Life of a Gentleman" (I, 79)! By introducing Will and his gang, "Defoe clearly is

attacking the notion of the 'gentleman thief' as popularized in the low life literature of the time."<sup>4</sup> In case Jack's conclusion was not sufficiently impressive, Will finally admitted, "I was far out Jack ... when I told you to be a notorious Thief was to live like a Gentleman" (I, 97).

Apparently one's attitude and motivation determined his culpability. Will revelled in the vice and pursued it as sport. In contrast, Jack and Moll, land-based thieves, and Bob, a pirate, were forced into a life of crime. They robbed because of necessity, not inclination. Moll's attitude revealed the difference between thieves. She thought the pair of shoplifters deserved their fate because they were coarse and careless. When they were apprehended and sentenced, she remarked casually: "... they robb'd together, so now they hang'd together, and there ended my new Partnership" (II, 25). Later she scorned the "harden'd vile Creatures" of Newgate who had exhibited similar feelings by mocking her (II, 122, 99-100). Then when she boarded the ship for America she acquired accommodations in the captain's quarters. From there she viewed with satisfaction the "old Fraternity" who were "kept under Hatches" (II, 145). As Watt explains,

Moll Flanders obviously places criminals into two classes: most of them are vicious reprobates who richly deserve their fate; but she and a few of her friends are essentially virtuous and deserving people who have been unfortunate .... Like Defoe, in fact, she is a good Puritan who, despite a few necessary and regrettable compromises, has, in the main and in defiance of illustrious precedent, lived in a world of pitch and not been defiled.<sup>5</sup>

The gentleman thief compelled by circumstance might be morally excusable, but he was not the pattern for Englishmen. As Roxana and Sir Robert Clayton agreed, "... a true-bred Merchant is the best Gentleman

in the Nation" (I, 198). When Roxana married the Dutch merchant, she found the epitome, a man with "a flourishing Business and a flowing Cash, who would at the first word, settle all my Fortune on myself and Children and maintain me like a Queen" (I, 199).

There were other ways to "use one's talent well." For instance, one could join the army: "...worthy footmen were often rewarded with commissions by their masters. It was indeed almost the only way to cleanse a man of the indignity of labor."<sup>8</sup> (Novak overlooks thievery prompted by circumstance.) Jack joined the Scottish infantry, "a certain way of living, which was honest, and which I could say, was not unbecoming a Gentleman" (I, 124). However, the prospect of "being a Gentleman Officer, as well as a Gentleman Soldier ... whetted ... [his] Ambition, [and] ... [he] dream't of nothing [else] ..." (I, 126). Many years elapsed before Jack was able to obtain a company and realize his dream. As the commander of a company in the Irish regiment of Dillon, he congratulated himself, "... I had never till now liv'd the life of a Gentleman" (II, 28). However, Jack claimed periodically that he had at last attained the rank of Gentleman; his announcement as a fledgling commander was more enthusiastic than accurate. Nevertheless, he had attained security and respectability with his office. The humorous conclusion of Jack's career as an officer, pinned to the ground beneath a dead German soldier, "who was almost as big as a Horse" (II, 43), hinted that Defoe thought military life was better than poverty or common labor but not as dignified as commerce.

Another method of achieving comfort and status was to be a gentleman-planter. This was an honorable, commerce-related vocation. One

could obtain a colonial estate and by this means legitimately move up the social scale. When Jack deserted the Scottish infantry and was sent to America, he worked diligently for the plantation owner who purchased him. Because of this industry, the landlord promoted Jack from a "poor half-naked Slave" to a "Gentleman" (I, 161-2). Of course, riding a horse, wearing clothes, and carrying a whip did not automatically make him a gentleman. He appeared to be one, and with the assistance of the landlord, he soon proved that he deserved the title. After trying the life of an officer on the continent, Jack came back to his plantations in America: "This deliberate return of his hero to the middle-class station of planter-merchant is surely Defoe's sanctioning of that social and economic level."<sup>7</sup> Proof of that sanction would seem to be the success the characters enjoyed as planters. Moll and Jack were "perfect colonists": They "created new wealth by growing tobacco; ...increased the population by importing slaves; ... employed the poor in the form of indentured servants and convicts; and ... imported products from England to use on their plantation ...." As a result, Jack and his wife and Moll and her husband were able to "return to England to spend their last years in prosperous repentance for their evil past." Bob Singleton "has the spirit of the colonizer" too, "but his contribution to the national wealth is to bring his treasure back to England.... In a sense ... they passed the economic test of Defoe's heroes and heroines."<sup>8</sup>

The primary goal of all the gentlemen was economic security. Without money one could not be genteel. However, some poor tradesmen, thieves, soldiers, and planters possessed aristocratic refinements. Moll's Colchester family explained, "... if a young Woman has Beauty, Birth,

Breeding, Wit, Sense, Manners, Modesty and all to an Extrem; yet if she has not money, she's no Body, she had as good want them all ..." (I, 15-16). The same rule applied to would-be gentry. If a man lacked "the main thing," he might have a noble spirit and a superior education, but if he did not acquire wealth, he would not be able to maintain the illusion for long. The man Singleton found in the jungles of Africa had abeyant possibilities, but he did not look like a gentleman.

However, financial security did not mean subsistence. One should live "handsomely," Moll would insist. In other words, "As long as a man possesses an adequate supply of cash, he need fear no evil. '... with money in the pocket, one is at home everywhere.'<sup>9</sup> Without an "adequate supply" the feeling of security vanished, and a concern about money dominated the character's thoughts. Not only the poverty-stricken but the man who expected to be poverty-stricken could not maintain the illusion of gentility: affluence was the necessary prerequisite.

To be sure, financial security enabled one to be a gentleman. However, the individual had to possess certain "economic virtues" if he wished to achieve the status. These traits sharpened the aspirant's perspective, enabling him to obtain the all-important prerequisite, wealth!

Correspondingly, the genteel virtues of Defoe's characters usually seemed to have an economic cast. In fact, "Moll frequently speaks of the noneconomic aspects of her life in the language of the tradesman. She refers to her 'stock' of moral qualities and thinks about 'increasing her store' of virtue."<sup>10</sup> For these characters whose prime mover was money, even virtue assumed a secondary role. Jack heard early in life

that "to be a Gentleman, was to be an Honest Man" (I, 187). He tried to be honest. Nevertheless, his actions revealed that "There was no such thing as absolute honesty or goodness; it was all relative in man. Men simply have different 'necessities.' Some succumb easily, some succumb only after great struggle but all succumb eventually. Defoe could envision a world without an honest man in it, given the right circumstances."<sup>11</sup> Generally the characters in the supporting roles were honest in their business dealings: the governess in Moll Flanders; the major and the Custom House clerk in Colonel Jack; the pirates and Quaker William in Captain Singleton; and the Dutch merchant and Sir Robert Clayton in The Fortunate Mistress. One writer points out,

... all of these assorted people ... when entrusted with money, often ill-gotten, wisely invest it or generously share it and, when the hero or heroine returns from an adventure or escapade, the money is waiting to be claimed--and in the absence of the owner it has been invested shrewdly and has increased substantially. Clearly Defoe [<sup>11</sup>a]... characters almost invariably transact their business like gentlemen."<sup>12</sup>

However, Defoe's main characters, and a few minor ones as well, often lied or withheld information: Moll didn't tell her "trusted" friend, the Governess, that the man who was going to America with her was her husband (II, 136); Moll didn't tell her husband that she left money in England (II, 173) even though he assumed she had "told all" (II, 141); both Moll and Roxana always saved back part of their money in each marriage and pretended to have revealed everything; Jack lied to the custom-house gentleman, telling him the money he wanted to invest was partly an inheritance and partly savings from his wages (I, 91)--the money was all obtained by thefts; Singleton and William Walter absconded an entire cargo instead of their share and deluded their comrades,

letting them believe they had perished (pp. 317-8); and even the Quaker lady, Roxana's friend, used half-truths, telling Susanna that her mother was Dutch and that only Cherry (Amy's nickname) was present (II, 101, 130). There were dozens of other discrepancies, utilized without second thoughts when one's business or personal welfare seemed to warrant it. The glasshouse owner ought to have said, "To be a gentleman, one should be honest, but one must be rich."

The heroines' dislike of artifice or "paint" seems to have been an extension of this two-sided principle of honesty. Roxana assured her prince, "... you have no Cheats put upon you ... I have not deceiv'd you with false colours" (I, 81). Moll scorned artifice also and "had never yielded to the baseness of Paint" (II, 54) until she was an elderly paramour. In fact, she only used "false colours" in her final illicit affair, her protracted engagement with the drunken gentleman who had picked her up in Bartholomew Fair. Moll finally explained that his "honesty" stemmed from vanity; she had "always had vanity enough to believe ... [she] had no need of it" (II, 54). Their naturalness was simply another variation on the same idea: present yourself in the best light possible to advance your own interests. One can safely assume that they would have employed physical artifice as readily as verbal deception if it had served their purposes.

The Dutch merchant mentioned another necessary virtue: he believed that "Gratitude ... was one of the brightest Parts of a Gentlewoman; that it was so twisted with Honesty ... that he questioned whether ... [it] cou'd be found, where Gratitude was not to be found ..." (II, 82-3). Elsewhere Defoe added, "Gratitude never dyes, and obligation



never ceases; nothing can wear it out of the Mind.... A Man of Honour can no more be an Ingrate, than a Man of Honesty can Steal" (The Evident Approach of a War and Something of the Necessity of it, p. 40). This natural and immutable law confused Roxana, and she prostituted herself for the generous landlord. He had saved her life and she felt compelled to repay him (I, 47). Novak explains, "By rewarding a person who has rescued her from death, she is following the laws of nature impeccably."<sup>13</sup> However, she realized at the time what her reaction might have been: to thank God for sending the landlord as a deliverer (I, 41). Since Providence works in all men's affairs, she presumably could have thanked God and not denied the natural principle by so doing. But what would have happened then? Probably the jeweler-landlord would have left, and her fortunes would have declined again. As a practical solution for her shaky financial situation, she gave the landlord what he wanted, permission to sleep with her. Even gratitude must be interpreted in terms of one's own personal advantage. One had to be grateful, whatever means of repayment he selected. When Roxana did not marry the Dutch merchant or repay him with cash after he saved her from the Jewish jeweler in Paris, she was indeed "one of the foolishest, as well as wickedest Creatures upon Earth ..." (I, 184). However, Roxana had allowed this merchant to sleep with her. She explained that it was not a lack of gratitude but a disdain for virtuous and prosperous living that caused her to call herself foolish and wicked: "Here I might have settled myself out of the reach even of Disaster itself ... and I might have liv'd like a Queen ... [and] quitted a life of Crime and Debauchery ..." (I, 185). Gratitude was imperative but even a grateful individual was

a fool if he did not properly consider his best interests.

For another rogue, Colonel Jack, "gratitude is good because it may be used advantageously in both public and private life as a dependable natural virtue .... The origin for Jack's arguments may be found in Hobbes's contention that since no one does any act of kindness without expectation of repayment, whether material or spiritual, ingratitude would cause a return to 'the condition of War'."14 Jack's benevolence arouses feelings of gratitude, an economic virtue and a necessary reaction if the economy is to operate smoothly. The principal example involved Mouchat, a slave whom Jack threatened with "the cruellest Punishment they [the slaves] had ever heard of...." He knew that fear would "thereby enhance the Value of their Pardon.... Then I was to argue with them, and work upon their Reason, to make the Mercy that was [to be] shew'd them sink deep into their Minds, and give lasting Impressions, explain the Meaning of Gratitude to them, and the Nature of an obligation ... as I had done with Mouchat" (I, 172-3). No servant could be more faithful than Mouchat was for the remainder of his life. When the other Negroes were treated kindly and reasonably, "the Temper of the roughest of them, would break and soften; the Sense of their own Interest would prevail with them first, or last ..." (I, 192). For a Negro, as well as a gentleman, gratitude was a reasonable and functional virtue. Jack also utilized the principle with his tutor, a man who had "never liv'd a happy Day ... till ... [he] landed in this Country, and work'd in ... [Jack's] Plantation" (I, 200). Jack's kindness earned for him a faithful and appreciative overseer. The same principle operated in Jack's last marriage, his second marriage to his first wife: "After four marriages, he has despaired

of finding an honest woman and is willing to accept a grateful one...."<sup>15</sup> When she appeared on his plantation as a transported criminal, he provided easier work. She responded gratefully and as a result they consummated their second marriage. By being a faithful wife she was satisfying nature's laws and acting in her best interests, actions Defoe could approve of.

In his book, Economics and the Fiction of Daniel Defoe, Maximillian Novak points out that Jack's method of handling slaves did not create an equality between master and servant. However, it resembled the "sympathetic partnership" Defoe advocated as the ideal relationship between the rich and the poor. Consequently, "Jack's understanding of this principle ... lifts him out of the servant class and into the realm of planters and gentlemen."<sup>16</sup> Similarly, Bob Singleton realized that they had to exploit slaves in order for their expedition to cross Africa. The men rejected his suggestion until he distinguished himself in a battle with the natives. Then the pirates dubbed him "Captain Bob" (p. 67) and selected him as their leader. His first act was the seizure of sixty Africans as well as their "Black Prince." Singleton was kind to the slaves, and they responded favorably. Without them the trip would have failed. While a modern humanitarian might view slavery as a travesty upon freedom, utility transcended humanity in Defoe's rogue histories. Both Jack and Captain Bob had learned another important economic lesson: "... in Defoe's fiction the ability and the willingness to exploit slaves are signs of the superior entrepreneur class."<sup>17</sup>

Because doing what was useful was a prerequisite to success, Defoe elevated utility to a virtue. Exploiting slaves was only one example

of the principle in operation. Defoe's heroes and heroines would define utility as an appreciation of "the main thing." When a "Person of very great Estate ... turn'd his Discourse to the Subject of Love; a Point so ridiculous to me, without the main thing, I mean the Money," Roxena declared that she "had no Patience to hear him make so long a Story of it" (I, 214-5). Jack remembered that he gained considerable reputation as a soldier, but in some ports he "got somewhat that ... [he] lik'd better, and that was a good deal of Money" (II, 30). Moll's awareness of the reality of life after the Elder Brother's deception made her an apostle of utility. Her comments in various incidents were consistent: "As for me, my Business was his Money, and what I could make of him" (II, 44)! "I had no Spleen at the saucy Rogue, nor were his submissions anything to me, since there was nothing to be got by him" (II, 74). "I had resisted some Casual Offers of Gallantry, and had manag'd that way well enough; I was not wicked enough to come into the Crime for the meer Vice of it, and I had no extraordinary Offers that tempted me with the main thing which I wanted" (I, 110). Neither love nor acclaim nor vice primarily interested the rogues: money was the "main thing they wanted." Speaking of Moll's single-mindedness, Dorothy Van Ghent questions the pickpocket's sanity, "... in terms of the full emotional variety of what we think of as the 'human,' she is monstrously abnormal. Her abnormality is her exclusive abstractness as a counter of cash; her subjective life is sunken nearly to zero."<sup>13</sup> As an example, Van Ghent points to Moll's acquisition of the "good pearl necklace":

When Moll tells us that she put on a 'good pearl necklace,' we do not know whether the pearls were large or small or graded or uniform size, or whether the necklace hung low on her bosom ... nor

do we know if the pearls were real or artificial ...; the 'good necklace' is mentioned ... only in a way that will suggest the market value of the necklace and ... its value as an indicator of social prestige.<sup>19</sup>

Sutherland views this solitary purpose as a type of game played by the characters: "It is not adultery that interests Defoe ... but rather the commercial aspect of prostitution. Moll and Roxana have a career, a profession to follow, and Defoe is interested in how much a woman can hold out for, and in what market she can best dispose of herself ...."<sup>20</sup> When Moll spoke of playing "with this Lover as an Angler with a Trout ..." (I, 148), she justified Sutherland's opinion. Then she continued, "I made no scruple of quitting my honest Citizen, whom I was not so much in Love with as not to leave him for a Richer" (I, 148). Her cold-hearted, single-minded attitude toward her "honest citizen" verifies Van Ghent's appellation: "monstrously abnormal counter of cash." On the other hand, Defoe and his rogues would quickly explain that the game they played was for survival (at least initially) and that abnormal circumstances necessitated the abnormal reactions. Moll had loved the Elder Brother, a normal reaction, and she had been cruelly abused. In fact, each of the characters encountered a world which demanded single-mindedness as a requisite for survival. Doing what was useful, i.e., always considering utility, became a necessary economic virtue. Jack and Bob exploited slaves; Roxana and Moll exploited sex. Utility as an economic virtue meant that an individual would do whatever was necessary to accumulate "the main thing" and thus to survive.

Because in Defoe's opinion "fear was the source of almost all human action, it is not surprising that he should have regarded courage, a seeming defiance of man's natural state, as the central virtue. He

called it 'the most fundamental Part of Mortality' ....<sup>21</sup> For the oppressed, courage was imperative, "for to sink under Trouble is to double the weight, and he that will Die in it, shall Die in it" (II, 2). Moll's bank-clerk husband did just that. He entrusted a large sum of money to a fellow bank clerk. The fellow "failed" and Moll's husband despaired and died (II, 2). A lack of courage could be equally disastrous for a gentleman. Roxane's first husband illustrated the point. When he spent the last of his fortune on hunting, he left her and joined the army. She saw him years later in Paris. Her wry comment summarized his decline: "A Man of Sense falls in the World, and gets-up again, and a Woman has some Chance for herself; but with a Fool! Once fall, and ever undone; once in the Ditch, and die in the Ditch; once poor and sure to starve" (I, 110). None of Defoe's principal characters can be justly accused of cowardice. When the ship captain left part of the mutinous crew (including Bob Singleton) stranded on the beach, the men accepted Bob's idea that it would be better to be "hang'd for a pyrate, rather than starve here" (p. 31). Jack displayed courage as a youth, refusing to yield to despair and clinging tenaciously to his ideals. However, the French bully who challenged him to duel, the one gentlemanly "article" which he had not learned, apparently caused Jack to doubt his bravery: "... Men never know themselves till they are tried, and courage is acquir'd by Time and Experience of Things" (II, 29). When he joined the army, he soon learned that he was not lacking in valor: "I was now Soldier enough not to be afraid to look a Man in the Face ..." (II, 54). However, Moll displayed the most courage, possibly because she had the most difficulties. While chuckling about this, Mark Schorer calls

Moll Flanders "a wonderful myth of female endurance ... (twenty children, not five; twenty lovers, not fifteen; five husbands, including a brother, not three) ...."<sup>22</sup> Her tremendous courage, the energy which enabled her to face life's vicissitudes, seldom faltered. Except for a two-year period after the death of her bank clerk, she quickly summoned her wits and went out to meet the world. Part of a proverb, "God helps those that help themselves," and a few lines from Jure Divino summarized the rogues' attitude toward life:

Heaven never will our faint Petitions hear,  
Till Just Endeavours supersede our Prayer;  
.....  
Christians must no more Miracles expect,  
And they that will be Slaves, He'll not protect;  
They that would have his Power to be their Friend,  
Must with what Power they have their Right Defend;  
In vain they for Divine Assistance stay,  
Unless they learn to fight as well as pray (Ek. ii, p. 19).

Another utilitarian virtue for middle-class gentility was mercy. By providing good schools and orphanages for the young, gentlemen would enable them to become respectable wage earners. Then they would need goods and services. When they paid for their wants, they would increase the money in circulation and uplift the economy. In time they would retire and their benevolence would enable the Utopian cycle to continue.

Providing merciful reform for prisoners and building hospitals for servants and slaves would have a similar effect. One's mercy would obligate them. Their resultant gratitude would prompt them to become responsible citizens. Obvious benefits would accrue: like the former orphans, the ex-inmates and revived workers would add to the country's purchasing potential. Furthermore, curbing crime would save money, and providing treatment for illness would lower the mortality rate, thereby

increasing the population and the theoretical wealth of the nation. Defoe was idealistic. However, one can hardly deny that if men were as responsible as Defoe hoped, the end result would be fewer disruptions of the economy. Mercy would be an extremely profitable virtue.

Convincing men of their responsibility was a difficult task. One of Defoe's spokesmen, Roxana's brother-in-law, argued forcefully for accepting one's responsibility to those less fortunate:

Charity is a Duty to the Poor, and He that gives to the Poor, lends to the Lord; let us lend our Heavenly Father a little of our Children's Bread, as you call it; it will be a Store well laid up for them, and will be the best Security that our children shall never come to want Charity or be turn'd out of Doors as these poor innocent Creatures are (I, 22).

... Remember that dreadful Scripture is directly against us, Prov. 21. 13; Whoso stoppeth his Ears at the cry of the Poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard (I, 23).

Roxana had sent her children to his house and he was arguing with his wife for mercy for them. As one might expect, this gentleman translated his mercy in economic terms, however, personal mercy this time, not national. After all, to be merciful was to purchase insurance.

When the responsibility was not clearly a particular gentleman's, Defoe wrote, "... then a hundred terrible things came into my Thoughts, viz., of Perish-Children being Starv'd at Nurse, of their being ruin'd, let grow crooked, lam'd, and the like, for want of being taken care of; and this sank my very Heart within me" (Roxana, I, 13). The present system was clearly inadequate in England. However "in one of our Neighbour Nations ... [the orphans left by condemned criminals] are immediately taken into the Care of the Government, and are put into an Hospital call'd the House of Orphans, where they are Fed up, Cloath'd, Fed, Taught, and when fit to go out, are plac'd to Trades, or to Services,



so as to be well able to provide for themselves by an honest industrious Behaviour" (Moll Flanders, I, 1-2). The treatment of Bob Singleton illustrated the inadequacy, the inhumanity, of the English system:

"...I was frequently moved from one Town to another, perhaps as the Parishes disputed my supposed Mother's last Settlement" (p. 3). Benevolent gentlemen should be properly indignant about these general injustices as politics, not the children's welfare, was the primary concern.

Novak thinks that "the hospital where Moll gives birth to the child of her Lancashire husband is the best and most detailed example of what Defoe had in mind in proposing some kind of hospital for the care of illegitimate or unwanted children ...."<sup>24</sup> Moll's apartment there was so "handsome and so clean" that she "was wonderfully pleased ...." Her "Maid's Behaviour spoke for itself, for a modester, quieter, soberer Girl never came into any Body's Family ...." For illegitimate children "easy Measures were here taken to rid the women's Burthen of a Child clandestinely gotten ... she [the Governess] had People always ready, who for a Price of Money would take the Child off their Hands ... she always took care ... and had no Nurses in her Business, but what were very Good People, and such as might be depended upon." By these careful measures the Governess "sav'd the Life of many an Innocent Lamb ... which would perhaps have been Murder'd; and of many a Woman ... made Desperate by the Misfortune ...." Furthermore, "Not a Man was ever seen to come up Stairs, except to Visit the Lying-In Ladies within their Month, nor then without the old Lady with them ...." The Governess could justifiably boast "that tho' she did take care of the Women when they were debauch'd, yet she was not Instrumental to their being debauch'd at all ...."

(I, 179-182). Such hospitals would prevent "the murder of illegitimate children, by which the world is deprived of people 'who might have been of use.' Like Mandeville, Defoe frequently thought of people as useful to the state in an economic sense ... adding to the population ... [was] according to mercantilist theory ... [adding] to the wealth of these countries."<sup>25</sup>

Like a true gentleman, Colonel Jack was appalled by the "miserable Provision [that] was wont to be made for poor Servants, when they are sick ..." (II, 84). Even though he did not recommend a solution, his fleeting reference revealed his merciful concern and indicated a need for reform, presumably in England as well as in the colonies.

During Defoe's sojourn in Newgate he became painfully aware of the need for reform. He probably saw some of the sights described in The Murder of Sir Edmund Berry Godfrey:

But most go to the Common Side, where there is din that never ceases, and men and women are herded indiscriminately, and the physical filth is surpassed only by the filth of the language, and the limbs of quartered men lying in an open cupboard waiting for the final horror of their disposal may be seen.<sup>26</sup>

Moll appropriately summarized the conditions, "... the Place seem [ed] an Emblem of Hell itself, and a kind of an Entrance into it" (II, 93). As Jack's tutor concluded, "... Newgate ... was a Place that seldom made Penitents, but often made Villains worse, till they learn'd to defy God and Devil" (I, 197). Moll was a living testimony of the effect of a few days in Newgate:

... the Horrors of the Place, were become familiar, and I felt no Uneasiness at the Noise and Clamours of the Prison ...; in a Word, I was become ... as wicked and as outrageous as any of them ... I was no more the same Thing that I had been, than if I had never been otherwise than what I was now (II, 105).

The environment and the effect were not the only problems. If a man wanted to repent, he might encounter a drunken Ordinary. This seemed to be the crowning injustice. Not only was a criminal likely to be hardened by the prison, but if by some miracle he did want to "settle his accounts," the Ordinary, as it were, mocked him (Moll Flanders, II, 103).

The implication seems to be that clean prisons with better accommodations and kinder treatment would be desirable. Also, the prisons should be staffed with sincere ministers such as the one who visited Moll. She related "that his business was to move me to such freedom of discourse as might serve to disturthen my own Mind, and furnish him to administer comfort to me as far as was in his Power ..." (II, 114-5). As a result of his kindness, he "reviv'd" Moll's heart and helped her obtain "the Comfort of a Penitent" (II, 115).

While these reforms could eliminate some evils, the problems of disposing of the lawbreakers and of handling the vicious miscreants would remain. For the former, Defoe had an answer: transportation to the colonies. Colonel Jack explained, "... there is not the poorest, and most despicable Felon that ever went over, but may (after his Time is serv'd) begin for himself, and may in Time be sure of raising a good Plantation" (I, 133). Of course, gentlemen made this reinstatement in honorable living possible for deserving ex-convicts: "But Heaven and kind Masters make up all those Things [Necessities] to a diligent Servant" (I, 133). Jack followed the rags-to-riches' formula and eventually owned a prosperous plantation. Apparently many colonists agreed with Defoe's solution:

Although no complete records are available showing the precise number of persons transported, we know that the three major contractors of convict labor for the colonies from 1713-1722 accounted for 17,740 felons drawn from Newgate and the Home Counties shipped to America, with nearly all going to Maryland and Virginia.... Some 30,000 felons were so transported to the colonies in the eighteenth century.<sup>27</sup>

The statistics reveal a mixture of mercy and utility; the slaves received life and opportunity; the plantation owners acquired cheap labor.

In the rogue histories Jack's handling of slaves apparently revealed the ultimate in merciful, utilitarian treatment. He was kind to the tractable, and he sold the recalcitrant. Utility demanded exploitation; mercy demanded kindness whenever possible. Above all, he considered the ultimate good of the plantation, and healthy, happy, grateful slaves promoted that end. However, his methods seem to reflect a change in Defoe's attitude. (Colonel Jack was published in 1727.) In the May 22, 1712, Review Defoe discussed the treatment of slaves:

He that keeps them in Subjection, whips, and corrects them in order to make them grind and labour, does Right, for out of their Labour he gains his wealth: But he that in his Passion and Cruelty, maims, lames, and kills them, is a Fool, for they are his Estate, his Stock, his Wealth, and his Prosperity.<sup>28</sup>

Jack's discoveries about the way to handle slaves reflected Defoe's seemingly inconsistent thoughts. Then Jack assumed his role of overseer, he punished a couple of slaves, and they laughed at his lack of severity. He sadly concluded that "a barbarous Manner ... was necessary ..." (I, 153-4). The experience enabled him to understand why other owners treated their slaves as they did:

... whipping the Negroes Slaves, was not so much owing to the Tyranny, and Passion, and Cruelty of the English, as had been reported ...; But that it is owing to the Frutality, and obstinate Temper of the Negroes, who cannot be managed by Kindness, and Courtesy; but must be ruled with a Rod of Iron ... or they would rise and murder all

their Masters ... if they had Arms and Ammunition suitable to the Rage and Cruelty of their Nature (I, 164).

However, in the next paragraph Jack admitted that he had made an unusual discovery:

But I began to see at the same Time, that this brutal Temper of the Negroes was not rightly manag'd; that they did not take the best Course with them, to make them sensible, either of Mercy or Punishment; and it was evident to me, that even the worst of those Tempers might be brought to a Compliance, without the Lash, or at least without so much of it, as they generally inflicted (I, 164).

Colonel Jack is not arguing for wholesale leniency but for "Discretion" at the "Point of Mercy" and "manag'd with the Assistance of Argument to convince the Negroes of the Nature and Reason of it, and to shew them what they ought to do in Return for it ..." (I, 176). Punishment was permissible. In fact, it was necessary unless the owner inculcated his servants and slaves with an awareness of gratitude's obligations. Mercy was the wisest course, but once again, it was subservient to the greater principle, utility, or awareness of "the main thing."

John F. Ross accuses Defoe, the tradesman, of being "an inevitable step in the process which led to the purely acquisitive society of later times, with its economic empires and wars, and its lack of social conscience; but he [Defoe] was quite unconscious of the dangers involved."<sup>29</sup> Such a view overlooks Defoe's criticism of "those merchants who refused to suspend their business during the plague at Marseilles, commenting sadly on the self-interest of mankind which places profit before the common good."<sup>30</sup> The rogues in Defoe's fiction did not resemble Ross's Defoe, the unconscious tradesman, nor the selfless Defoe suggested by the latter view. They were basically and understandably selfish, but they did realize the need for honesty, gratitude, and mercy. Usually

a true comprehension of the probable long-term results prompted them to assist others, thereby helping the nation and the economy and indirectly aiding their cause. When the virtues conflicted with utility, then the poverty-stricken, the would-be gentleman, "minded the main chance"; on the other hand, the gentlemen were honest, grateful, and merciful because they could afford to be.

The economic virtues enabled one to become a gentleman and to maintain his position. However, financial stability, the reward of economic virtue, was only the initial attribute of gentility. When an individual had attained the status, he could (and should) concern himself with suitable appearance and aristocratic refinements.

However, a proper realization of what they could afford was imperative. One of the ways to certain ruin was "extravagance of fine clothes" (Complete English Tradesman, I, 112). The key was extravagance. Sir Robert Clayton would explain that a Business man who had "master'd the World and ... [was] above the Demand of Business, "who only spent what he got, and not [all of] that; and [who] ... laid up great Sums every Year" (Roxana, I, 198), might discreetly buy some of the conveniences of life. To make Jem "appear, as he really was, a very fine Gentleman," Moll bought him "two good long Wigs, two Silver Hilted Swords, three or four fine Fowling Pieces, a fine Saddle with Holsters and Pistols very handsome, with a Scarlet Cloak; and in a word, everything I could think of ..." (II, 172; the italics are mine.) A tradesman-sportsman could bankrupt himself by purchasing similar trappings. But for Moll, a gentlewoman-planter who had "master'd the World," the expenditure was one she could well afford.

The nouveaux riches cultivated genteel graces as well. Following his education by the indentured servant, Jack concluded that living so far from newsworthy happenings was undesirable: "... the old Reproach often came in my Way, namely, that even this was not yet the Life of a Gentleman." He wanted to acquire the graces of his superiors and to travel: he had "a secret Resolution to see more of the World if possible, and realize those Things to my Mind, which I had hitherto only entertained remote Ideas of, by the Help of Books" (I, 207). As a result, he went to France. While he was there, he learned to play cards and to dance (II, 3). He also learned the French language and developed an appreciation of good music. As he explained, "I accomplished myself with every Thing that was needful to make me what I believed myself to be even from a Boy--I mean a Gentleman" (II, 3). At last gentleman Jack could afford the diversions he had always dreamed of.

However, one only needs to remember the life of Moll, the servant girl with the genteel attainments, to realize the secondary nature of social graces. She could dance, sing, write, play the harpsichord, and speak French (I, 13), but she was an impostor. When the Elder Brother spurned her, she had refinements but no status, somewhat like an airplane with no propeller. However, while Moll was above her station, the Elder Brother was below his. To exploit slaves for economic advantage might be permissible, but to take advantage of servants for one's own pleasure was despicable. In other words, clothes did not "make the man." Experienced in harsh reality, aged Moll knew that money enabled a man to look like a gentleman whereas character in addition to money and suitable refinements constituted gentility. But an individual who had

character without "the main thing" was simply a poor man with noble aspirations. Aware of reality Moll occasionally used the term gentleman wistfully: "... he [Jemy] was already a Gentleman, unfortunate and low, but had liv'd well ... a Fortune would not have been ill bestow'd on him, for he was a lovely Person indeed; of generous Principles, good Sense, and of abundance of good Humour" (I, 160). Many years elapsed though before Jemy had appropriate finery. Moll and her ex-highwayman did not make the mistake of Roxana's first husband, the tradesman-sportsman. They knew that what a man was and what he had were more important than what he appeared to be.

When Jack had satisfied himself that he had "everything that was needful" to make himself a gentleman, he became aware of "a Lady, in the House opposite to the House ... [he] lodg'd in, who made an extraordinary Figure ..." (II, 2). He had wealth, education, and equipage. Furthermore, he had traveled and gained polish. Therefore, he could proceed "to the next essential step outlined in The Compleat English Gentleman-- ... a conjugal life which is 'all harmony and musick, peace and joy.'" <sup>31</sup> After a lengthy contest of wits lasting almost two years, they "were privately marry'd ..." (II, 10). To his great consternation, he soon discovered "what she really was, a wild untam'd Colt ... [who] kept Company that I did not like, liv'd beyond what I could support, and sometimes lost at Play more than I car'd to pay ..." (II, 11). There was no harmony, music, peace, or joy except for a brief respite during her "Lying-Inn" (II, 14). Her loose conduct forced them apart and Jack sued for divorce (II, 17). Sickened momentarily by marriage, he left England. But his desire for "a settled Family life (II, 61)" prevailed. He not



only married once more but four more times, equalling Moll's total. Moll's "land-water-thing" had "undone" her by a similar extravagance, and Roxana's first husband had wasted his substance too. However, when the characters found a partner who had a proper appreciation of the value of money, they had marital harmony: Roxana with her Dutch merchant, Bob with the Quaker's sister, Jack with his fourth and fifth wives, and Moll with Jem, an ex-highwayman who was not an ideal planter but who did let Moll manage the money and balance the budget.

Jack's first wife's extravagance, gambling, partying and whoring were the sources of disruption in that marriage. But Jack's second marriage was the result of his indiscretion: "... she found Means to get some Wine into my Head more than I us'd to drink, and tho' I was not so disorder'd with it, but that I knew very well what I did, yet in an unusual Height of good Humour, I consented to be Married .... [Then] I knew not what to do with this new Clog, which I had loaded myself with, I could neither stay with her, or take her with me, so that I was exceedingly perplex'd" (II, 46). When she had an affair with the Marquis, he left her. Soon he courted another lady: "... in short, the first Time I came I made Love to her .... It came indeed a little into my Thoughts, that I was a married Man, and had a second Wife alive, who tho' she was ... a whore, yet I was not legally divorc'd from her ... but I soon got over that Part ..." (II, 67). Again he was "privately married" (II, 69), and peace reigned for six years. Then she took "Cordials and hot Liquors" (II, 69) for an illness, became addicted, lost her self-control, slept twice with a ship's captain, and eventually died. Jack "had three innocent Children" and "resolved I would Marry

as any Thing offer'd, tho' it was mean, and the meaner the better; I concluded my next Wife should be only taken as an upper Servant ... and let her be Whore or honest Woman ... I am resolv'd I won't much concern myself about that..." (II, 74-5). Even though he knew his resolution was ridiculous, he confessed, "I reason'd and talk'd to myself in this wild Manner so long, that I brought myself to be seriously desperate; that is, to resolve upon another Marriage..." (II, 75). Finally he settled upon "an innocent Country Wench" whom he decided "would answer my End..." (II, 76). They were married and lived happily. Moggy had only one flaw; she "had, it seems, make a Slip in her younger Days, and was got with Child ten years before, by a Gentleman ... who promised her Marriage, and afterwards deserted her..." (II, 80). She died from a fall and Jack was a widower once again. His last marriage was a remarriage to his penitent first wife. Thus the title correctly stated, "Five times married to Four Whores."

Michael Schinagol views this series of marriages as "Defoe's way of condemning most compellingly the failings of the gentry to act like true gentlemen.... The 'disgusting series of marriages' which offended John Masfield's critical sensibilities is to be read as Defoe's commentary on how the conjugal state was being subverted by the very vices made fashionable by the upper classes."<sup>32</sup> Jack and the "Clog" fornicated. Then he forgot the "main thing" and married her. Drinking and a frivolous attitude precipitated the act. When she was unfaithful, he duelled with the Marquis, an unlawful and foolish but fashionable recourse. Because he had violated civil law, he would not return to divorce her. Therefore, he committed bigamy when he remarried. Later when he decided to marry Moggy, they went to a Romish priest. A "true Protestant" gentleman and his country wench! Guilty of

fornication, indiscretion, dueling, bigamy, intended exploitation (his motive for marrying Moggy), and posing as a Catholic, "gentleman" Jack was disgusting.

Defoe abhorred fashionable excesses whether they resulted in unfortunate marriages, destroyed happy ones, or merely caused a gentleman to play the role of a fool. For instance, Defoe was laughing at Jack when he said, "...tho' I had learn'd a great many good Things in France to make me look like a Gentleman, I had forgot the main Article of learning how to use a Sword..." (II, 20). Jack had just been accosted by a foul-mouthed bully swearing he would protect the honor of Jack's ex-wife, a whore. The Colonel had acted honorably and had no reason to fight over a bill he did not owe, the honor his ex-wife did not possess, or an insult by a disgusting Frenchman. The constable saved Jack by evicting the stranger. When Jack was challenged again, years later, he "was now Soldier enough not to be afraid to look a Man in the Face..." (II, 54). He had just reasoned with the Marquis, whom he suspected of sleeping with his wife, that "there was no Reason in the Thing, that after any Man should have found the Way into my Bed, I, who am injur'd should go and stake my Life upon an equal Hazard against the Men who have abus'd me" (II, 54). But reason did not prevail. They walked to the edge of Paris and wounded each other. Jack had to flee from the country, and the Marquis lost his commission. Clearly nothing was gained by the encounter with either Frenchman. Once again, Jack seemed to be confused about the proper conduct and attainments for gentility.

One of man's natural impulses, the sex drive, also caused trouble for the gentry. After the prince had admired her low-cut dress, kissed her breasts, and put a jeweled necklace on her, Roxana stopped the action

and criticized lust: " ... to draw the just Picture of a Man enslav'd to the Rage of his vicious Appetite; how he defaces the Image of God in his Soul, dethrones his Reason; causes Conscience to abdicate the Possession and exalts Sense into the vacant Throne; how he deposes the Man, and exalts the Brute" (1, 85). One may wonder why the Queen of Whores would deliver such an outburst, but no one can deny that she was "a standing Mark of the Weakness of Great Men, in their Vice; that value not squandering away immense Wealth, upon the most worthless Creatures ... nothing will, at last, prove more absurd, that the Great Men are at to purchase their own Destruction" (1, 93). Another whore, Moll Flanders, criticized gentlemen who pick up "a common Woman, without any regard to what she is ... such a Man is worse than a Lunatick ..." (11, 43-4). The inclination might have been a natural impulse, but to succumb was to reveal one's injudiciousness. Gentlemen married and used the marriage bed to satisfy their drives. Here also, the lesson is at least partially practical. As Roxana, the recipient of gifts, and Moll, the pick-pocket, could attest, whoring was an extremely expensive vice.

If Defoe had been criticizing only the wasting of money, he would have approved of inexpensive promiscuity. This was not the case. In an absolutely unbelievable incident, Defoe pictured the results of toying with virtue, i.e., what the modern man would call technical virginity. One point became quite clear: necking and petting were not technically sinful, but in a world of reality one had to assume they would precipitate sinful acts. Moll claimed that their experiment was founded on "a noble Principle.... I frequently lay with him, [Gentleman of Bath] and altho' all the Familiarities of Man and wife were common to us, yet he

never once offered to go any farther, and he valu'd himself much upon it.... We liv'd thus near Two Years ... Had we continu'd thus, I confess we had had much to boast of; but as wise men say, it is ill venturing too near the brink of a Command, so we found it..." (I, 120). Roxana made an identical discovery: "So far does fooling and toying sometimes go, that I know nothing a young Woman has to be more cautious of ..." (I, 43). As a result of "fooling and toying," Moll became the mistress of the Bath gentleman. Guilty of the same folly, Amy was made pregnant by Roxana's amour, the jeweler-landlord. Neither the fornication nor the illegitimacy received sharp censure. After all, in a world of poverty and necessity, an individual might have to transgress civil laws and moral dogmas. The point seems to have been that neither Moll nor Amy had to prostitute themselves; Moll's friend supported her before the act, and Amy received her bread because her employer, Roxana, slept with the landlord. Neither Moll nor Amy could plead poverty or necessity as justification. Survival was one's primary consideration, but Christianity was an important secondary qualification. Gentlemen might sin to eat, but they should never sin because they enjoyed sinning.

Defoe was sharply critical not only of fashionable excesses and loose morals but also of the luxury and profusion of the nobility and gentry. In The Complete English Tradesman he complained because "many of these great and noble families have been impoverish'd by the luxurious way of living ... and the estates of these great families have been swallow'd up by the commonalty and tradesmen ..." (II, pt. ii, 151-2). However, Defoe did not object to "luxuries in the sense of conveniences. He admitted that furniture was 'less founded on a Natural Necessity of

Life, because we may be said to live without fine Houses, &c. but by Custom and Usage are made equally Necessary in some sense.' He called such items 'Conveniences of Life.'<sup>33</sup> Defoe's fictional characters eventually had homes, and one assumes that they had suitable conveniences. The lack of space given to the description of fine furnishings suggests that they were properly placed in the Characters' lists of priorities, another of those physically unnecessary but socially advantageous items which gentlemen purchased when they could afford to. And Defoe would want his people to purchase these items eventually: "'This new method of Living, saving the Errors of it, as it may be reckon'd a Vice,' Defoe confessed, 'is however the great support of Trade in the World.' And elsewhere he states that 'wise men in Commerce tell us, 'some Errors, even in Mortality, had better be wink'd at, than the Trade be ruin'd...' By supporting trade, luxury also kept the poor employed."<sup>34</sup> For people whose virtue was based on sound economic principles, a comfortable vice which assisted trade was certainly acceptable.

Another vice was of even greater danger for tradesmen: private ventures on foreign soils. In an unusual episode Moll learned that a secure, home-based trade is much better than risky adventures abroad. She stole a Dutchman's trunk at herwich. Hearing a boat announced for Ipswich, she had the porter carry the trunk to the boat. Custom's officials questioned her when they arrived there, but a lie saved her: she said that the trunk was her husband's and that he had the key. Then by subtle inquiry she learned where the Colchester road was, walked into the country, hired a horse and rider, and rode the rest of the day, carrying the contents of the trunk. After hiding overnight in a small

town, she continued her journey to Colchester, where she stayed three or four days. Then she hired a wagon, returned to Harwich, collected her belongings, and sailed to London. After paying for a week's lodging and transportation to and from Colchester and considering the danger of stealing in an area where she had no friends and where she was not familiar with the locale, she wisely concluded: "... tho' by the Accident of the last Adventure, I got something considerable, yet I was not fond of any more Country rambles; nor should I have ventur'd Abroad again if I had carried the Trade on to the End of my Days..." (II, 92).

However, in his private dealings with Mexico, Jack was the worst offender. He became a "Trade Thief" and a "Trade Lunatick," terms that Defoe applied to capitalists who pursued immoderate wealth by circumventing the established rules of trade (The Complete English Tradesman, II, 103). Defoe's comments on the Jamaica trade are relevant: "... it is a Trade, which however gainful it may be to particuler Men, whether, Dutch or English, is not advantageous to them as Nations, seeing it is no Increase of their Commerce in general, but only in Anticipation of one part of it" (Atlas Maritimus & Commercialis, p. 305). Jack bypassed the normal channels for trade and made two clandestine trips into the Gulf of Mexico. On the second, Spanish war ships chased his vessel to Pensacola in Florida while he was on shore trading on the coast of Mexico. The vessel grounded and the men fled. Abandoned Jack had to live in exile for sometime, and during that time he was afflicted with the gout. He had made a profit. However, his exile, the danger of detection and enslavement, the loss of his ship and cargo, and the ship captain's death as he attempted to return to Virginia revealed the lunacy of such ventures.

Nothing--not dueling, whoring, "fooling and toying," immoderate expenditures, nor "trade lunacy"--was as serious a vice as drink: "Drink, like the Devil, when it gets Hold of anyone, tho' but a little, it goes on by little and little to their Destruction ..." (Colonel Jack, II, 69). Jack could speak from experience. Drink had "gotten hold" of him at some unfortunate moments in his career. After a long night of drinking, he had been spirited away to America and sold as a slave. In an incident already mentioned, tipsy Jack married his second wife, his "Clog." Then his third wife became an alcoholic, "a Beast, a Slave to strong Liquor ..." (II, 69). While drunk, "she twice was exposed in the most scandalous Manner with a Captain of a Ship, who ... took the advantage of her being in Drink, and not knowing what she did ..." (II, 69). Then the villain plied her nurse with liquor and had a double affair with both women in the same room at the same time. Neither woman realized what was happening "till the Wench being with Child, discover'd it for herself..." (II, 71). Jack locked his wife in her room to protect her. He "pity'd her heartily ..." (II, 71) because she was innocent of willful vice; she simply could not control herself when she was drunken. The third wife's plight is a moving object lesson of the "power of intemperance." However, to capitalize fully on the didactic possibilities, Defoe and Jack digressed after relating the double affair. At that point they related a tale of a young boy who imbibed, lost his reason, and "murder'd his Father, and lay with his Mother" (II, 70). Then Jack concluded the unhappiest tale of drinking in the rogue histories by telling the reader that the third wife died about eighteen months later as a result of her alcoholism.



Jack had always been sympathetic about drinking. Earlier he had defended drunken slaves' acts explaining that "To be drunk in a Nagroe, is to be Mad, for when they get Rum they are worse than raving and fit to do any manner of Mischief" (I, f. on p. 163). In fact, a slave on his plantation had stolen a bottle of rum, made himself and a couple of friends drunk and then abused two Negro wives. Empathetic Jack concluded that the thief only ought to be punished for theft because "like Noah, he did not know the Strength of it, and when he had it in his head, he was a Mad-man ... so that for all the rest he deserv'd Pity rather than Punishment" (I, 162). In his utilitarian world he could understand the Nagroe's rape, but his thievery was inexcusable. In characteristic fashion he criticized the moral vice but found as a basis for the crime an error in economics, an unnatural way of securing one's wants.

After all, it was not moderate drinking that concerned him in his third marriage. He had prevailed upon his wife "to drink a Glass or two of Wine ... in Company..." (II, 70). After she used liquor as medication, he bewailed her "hellish Excess ..." (II, 70). Drinking was not wicked until the Devil "got hold" of the drinker. Then, the reader can infer, the drinker lost control and by so doing lost sight of the "main chance," his primary goal, and decorum, the external evidences of good taste in conduct and appearance which were expected of a gentleman.

Drink played a minor role in Roxana. The landlord lover gave two glasses of wine apiece to Roxane and Amy on one occasion, but the initial affair was not precipitated by drinking, nor was the "fooling and toying" which led to Amy's pregnancy (I, 26, 44-3, 50-1). At Roxana's lavish parties, she had tables "cover'd with Wine and Sweetmeats ..." (I, 202),

but even there the wine did not seem to be the cause of the vice.

Bob Singleton did not mention alcoholism, but Moll did. When she lodged at the Mint, she encountered a group of men who drank heavily: "...there was something horrid and absurd in their way of Sinning, for it was all a force even upon themselves; they did not only act against Conscience, but against Nature ..." (I, 64). These men were guilty of the worst evil caused by drinking, "starvation, for, as Defoe observed, too many workers drank down their wages in taverns instead of helping to support their families."<sup>35</sup> However, Moll's principal object lessons were her lovers. The wealthy Bartholomew Fair gentleman, Moll's last amour, "would often make just Reflections ... with respect to himself; how Wine introduc'd the Inclinations, how the Devil led him to the Place, and found out an Object to tempt him ..." (II, 56). An earlier affair began when Moll and her Bath gentleman had "drank, I think, a little more both of us, than usual, tho' not in the least to disorder us ..." (I, 121). In spite of their moderation in tippling, they had had sufficient to lower their resistance, and she allowed him "the last favour," ending two years of unusual but moral (according to Moll and Defoe) sharing of the same bed. When her life of adventures ended, she encountered another nauseating drunkard, the Newgate Ordinary, "preaching Confession and Repentance ... in the Morning" and "drunk with Brandy by Noon..." (II, 103). Moll, the whore, thief, and moderate drinker was a strange voice of conscience, but she was the only mouthpiece Defoe had.

An admission of the pitfalls of genteel living was not intended to discourage aspirants. This life was the "good life" provided one did not duel, whore, "fool and toy," live too luxuriously, disrupt trade or

drink excessively. But what one could not do was not the central issue. After all, a poor man couldn't afford expensive mistakes either. The primary concern was security from want as long as one's wants were reasonable. When a person exceeded sensible limits, he faced two dangers: bankruptcy and the fact that an insatiable appetite could never be satisfied. Therefore, when Moll talked about "how much happier a Life of Virtue and Sobriety is, than that which we call a Life of Pleasure" (I, 202), she was stating what seemed to be an economic principle and a truism about satisfying men's appetites. Commenting on this, James Sutherland remarked, "He [Defoe] was not perhaps a very religious man; he gives the impression of having thought in terms of right and wrong, rather than of good and evil. But he certainly had a strong preference for good conduct, a regular and well-ordered life, and 'the single talent well employed'...."<sup>36</sup> To find a gentleman, one looked for decorum, the economic virtues, and industry as Sutherland suggests. But he would also find refinement, conveniences (temperate luxury), a little liquor perhaps, some travel brochures, musical instruments, and a wealthy penitent. To become a gentleman, one needed the qualities Sutherland mentions. But the good life was something more, an ease and pleasure no poor man could ever enjoy and no immoderate gentlemen could enjoy for long.

The road to gentility had to begin somewhere. Its point of departure was not a mystery; even the ship's gunner who tutored Bob knew where a man began: "... to be ignorant, was to be certain of a mean Station in the World, but that Knowledge was the first Step to Preferment" (p. 69). Defoe was trying to show that "the aspirations and success of the middle class in large part rested on the kind of education they

received."<sup>37</sup> In fact, "Trenchard's and Manderville's picture of the charity-school boys as a 'sort of idle and rioting Vermin' was quickly attacked by Defoe, who mocked Manderville's fear that an educated poor might refuse to be servants, and argued that every man should have the opportunity to advance himself as far as his abilities would carry him" (Charity Still a Christian Virtue, p. 6). Many clearly did not have such opportunity. Improved public school education would encourage and assist future tradesmen (and would-be gentlemen) and would "prevent the Destruction of so many unhappy children, as, in this Town, are every Year bred up for the Executioner" (Colonel Jack, I, vii). In order for these youngsters to be happy they needed wealth; and, in order for them to acquire wealth, they needed an education. Gentility was the reasonable goal, and education provided the key to realizing that goal.

In his essay, "An Academy for Women," Defoe maintained "that the capacity and the need for education are as great in women as in men."<sup>38</sup> Elsewhere he explained, "I have often thought of it as one of the most barbarous customs in the world, considering us a civilised and a Christian country, that we deny the advantages of learning to women. We reproach the sex every day with folly and impertinence; which I am confident, had they the advantages of education equal to us, they would be guilty of less than ourselves."<sup>39</sup>

This education should impart to the future gentility awareness of the value of money. Bob Singleton ruefully admitted, "I thought I had enough already, and all the Thoughts I had about disposing of it, if I came to Europe, was only how to spend it as fast as I could ..." (p. 161). He did not learn until after he wasted his earnings that life need not

be a continuous cycle of acquisition and wasteful spending followed by more acquisition. Moll learned the value of money by bitter experience also. After she succumbed to the Elder Brother's importunities, she realized that her price was much too low. Not having a good sense of the market value of her virtue, she prostituted herself for 500*l*, much less than the estate she might have gained as the Elder Brother's wife (I, 57, 39). Bob also illustrated those individuals who have had no education until tutored by experience. Moll was an example of the errors of education, being skilled in dancing, singing, speaking, and in playing an instrument: "... her education not only exceeds her provision but renders her vulnerable to temptation. ... the longer Moll's education in gentility continues, the more susceptible she is to gold as well as 'fine words' (I, 20)."<sup>40</sup> Paradoxically, it was her desire to become a gentlewoman that resulted in her becoming a whore. Bob and Moll needed a practical education preparing them for their problems and teaching them to value and to understand money so they could "advance as far as their abilities would carry them."

In Defoe's school the administrator would have grouped students according to their expectations. A typical argument was that

A Parent is to take good heed that he never educates his Children above the Provision he designs to make for them; ... it being much more easy to bear with a mean Condition constantly, than to fell into it from a plentiful and good one; which is the Case of People better educated than provided for ....<sup>41</sup>

Theoretically, Moll, Jack, and Bob could have been happy members of the lower middle class, perhaps as a seamstress, a soldier, and a sailor. But Defoe had said that education should provide "the opportunity to advance ... as far as ... [one's] abilities will carry him." If marriage,

conservative investment, colonizing, or savings enabled a man or woman to move up to a more comfortable station, Defoe would have applauded. Children should know what their status was and how to cope with it, but that practical information certainly did not exclude sensible ambition.

Education not only provided instruction in finance and an awareness of one's status and potential, but it also helped people develop self-control. To do this, the training had to emphasize virtue. Moll's education stressed refinements but not chastity. As a result, she had few, if any qualms about yielding to the Elder Brother. Defoe provided an explanation: "Without the restraint of a virtuous training, women as well as men are subject to their sexual passions, which have been allowed full freedom by the laws of nature in order to permit mankind to produce offspring."<sup>42</sup> The force of necessity overcame Roxana's knowledge; Jack succumbed because of drink on one occasion, specious argument on another, and three children on still another; and Bob did not have opportunities. However, even though the rogues' records generally were not creditable, a virtuous education could serve as a deterrent. If it failed initially, it would certainly make the road back to repentance easier to find.

Economics, reality, and self-control were important lessons, but they did not prepare a man for his ultimate and final task, repentance. Divine providence moved upon men continually, prompting contrition. But an individual could repent only when he became aware of this "invisible hand" moving throughout his affairs. Early religious training enabled men to recognize the weight of sin and to seek forgiveness before a nearly insurmountable list of errors accumulated.

Before Quaker William explained the ways of God to Singleton, the

pirate captain said, "I think we have had pretty good Luck" (p. 309). Jack's first partner in crime attributed their success to Jack's "lucky News ..." (I, 51). Unschooled Colonel Jack related that Captain Jack "had the good luck to have a very easy good Master ..." (I, 140). And immoral Roxana said that news of the Prince's change of heart "came to me in a very unlucky Hour ..." (II, 42). Elsewhere Moll's mother asked her, "What miserable chance could bring thee hither" (I, 99)? Moll had said, "Fortune had smil'd upon me ... [and] I know not what Fate guided me ..." (II, 85). But neither luck, chance, fortune, nor fate were responsible for their problems or successes: "Calvin had contended that 'Fortune and Chance are heathen terms .... For if all success is blessing from God, and calamity and adversity are his curse, there is no place left in human affairs for Fortune and Chance.'"43

Colonel Jack, who "as to Religion ... understood so little about it," had mistakenly "gone upon a Notion of Things founded only in their Appearance, as they affected me with Good or Evil, esteeming the happy and unhappy part of Life to be those that gave me Ease or Sorrow ..." (I, 203, 202). However, as the tutor continued the training, Jack discovered that his literal-minded view was no more accurate than the abstractions or superstitions he and the others had referred to.

When the spiritual perception of the characters developed, the way in which Providence worked inspired awe and fear. One of their first discoveries was that "none of all these Things befall us without the Direction of a Divine Power ... God had order'd every Thing, the most Minute and least Transaction of Life, inasmuch That not a Hair of our Head shall fall to the Ground without his Permission ..." (Colonel Jack,

I, 205). This concern with men's affairs was not a mere awareness of their activity. Calvin had explained that "success is blessing from God, and calamity and adversity are his curse ...."<sup>44</sup> Thus on some occasions Providence "miraculously deliver'd from Dangers and Mischiefs ... by an invisible Hand in Mercy ..." (Colonel Jack, I, 203), while on others it delivered a "Blast from Heaven ... the very Reverse of ... former Good Days ..." (Roxana, II, 160). The gentleman of Bath "was mercifully snatch'd out of the Gulph by a convincing Work upon his Mind" while Moll "was left as if ... abandon'd by Heaven to a continuing in ... Wickedness" (I, 130). Sometimes humans needed "more than ordinary secret Assistance from the Grace of God ..." (Moll Flanders, II, 121). If they did not receive the help, it would be conspicuous in its absence. At other times characters' lives were "full of Variety," but they were insensible of the mercy (Colonel Jack, I, 203). If Providence seemed to be fickle and inconsistent, one knew that it was merely the inscrutable wisdom of God effecting once again His not-so-obscure purpose, bringing men to repentance.

Defoe apparently believed that he could function as Providence did when he wrote the rogue histories. He introduced Moll Flanders with the following comment:

Throughout ... this Book ... there is not a wicked Action in any part of it, but is first or last rendered Unhappy and Unfortunate; There is not a superlative Villain brought upon the Stage, but either he is brought to an unhappy End, or brought to be a Penitent: There is not an ill thing mention'd but it is condemn'd ... nor a virtuous just thing, but it carries its Praise along with it ... (I, ix).

Providence usually "works by the Hands of Nature ..." (Moll Flanders, II, 156). A terrifying blast of thunder and lightning caused Bob Singleton,



to suppose "that God had taken me into his immediate Disposing, and had resolved to be the Executer of his own Vengeance" (p. 237). Roxana and Amy were "very much Disturbed" when "Death began to stare in ... their Face[s]" during a terrible storm at sea (I, 143). In yet another oceanic tempest Jack's goods which were purchased with stolen money perished. He thanked Providence for destroying the tainted goods; his heaven-sent prosperity, the plantation, would not be polluted as a result (I, 188-9). Another natural occurrence, death of a loved one, effectively changed the Prince's conduct (Roxana, I, 127). Similarly, severe sickness made some men conscious of their sins. Moll's "Lover [Gentleman of Bath] had been at the Gates of Death ... and it seems struck ... with sad Reflections upon his past Life of Gallantry and Levity ..." (I, 128). Dreams were a common vehicle also. Colonel Jack dreamed about an arrest at approximately the time of the arrest on the night Will was seized and taken to Newgate (I, 83). Providence also used dreams to cause one to reflect. For instance, Moll had terrible dreams during her Newgate imprisonment, harassed by "Gibbets and Halters, evil Spirits and Devils" (II, 102). Following Susanna's disappearance, Roxana "saw her by-Night and by-Day ... sleeping or waking, she was with me ..." (II, 154). Moll remembered an amazing use of dreams: people could not contain secrets about sinful deeds but would tell them in their sleep if they didn't have a day-time outlet. For instance, one fellow Moll met in Newgate was a Night-flier. In other words, each night the jailers let him out. He would steal, return, tell all he'd done and thus provide "those honest People they call Thief-Catchers with Business to find out the next Day, and restore for a Reward ..." (II, 156). Honest is ironic, but Defoe

apparently believed the Night-flier story, or his criticism of the Thief-Catchers would have crumbled. To prevent doubt, Moll assured the reader that Providence, "which ordinarily Works by the Hands of Nature, makes Use here [in dreams], of the same natural Causes to produce these extraordinary Effects" (II, 155). In many other instances, Providence used "extraordinary Effects." For instance, when Moll returned from a five-week visit to her son's Virginia plantation, she brought many wonderful gifts. But when she told Jemmy she "had brought over in the Sloop ... the Horses, Hogs, and Cows, and other Stores ...," he was visibly affected: "... from this time forward ... he was as sincere a Penitent, and as thoroughly a reform'd Man, as ever God's Goodness brought back from a Profligate, a Highwayman, and a Robber" (II, 171-2). Moll herself could "fill a larger History than this, with the Evidences of this Truth ..." (II, 172). However, a simple reminder that Providence controlled everything, not just weather, mortality, health, sleep and livestock, should suffice. The reader knows that any incident Moll related could be explained in terms of Providential intervention or obstruction.

While the workings of Providence were marvelous, Roxana explained that a person could become insensitive to these wonders: "So possible is it for us to roll ourselves up in Wickedness, till we grow invulnerable by Conscience; and that Centinel, once doz'd, sleeps fast, not to be awaken'd while the Tide of Pleasure continues to flow, or till something dark and dreadful brings us to ourselves again" (I, 73). Moll experienced this hardened state late in her criminal career. She had a fortune. When her companions were seized, she should have quit. But the thought did not occur to her: "From hence 'tis evident, that when once we are

harden'd in Crime, no Fear can affect us, no Example give us Warning" (II, 39). Roxana became so hardened that she lived "six and twenty Years of Wickedness, without the least Signals of Remorse ..." (I, 220). As she had explained, "my Vanity was fed up to such a height, that I had no room to give Way to such Reflections" (I, 83). Besides, she "had so long habituated ... herself to a life of Vice, that really it appear'd to be no Vice ..." (I, 220). For Moll the "dark and dreadful something" which brought her to repentance was her imprisonment. For Jack, it was exile in Mexico. Bob repented when Quaker William explained about Providence. Roxana had sufficient warnings, but her final words were as follows: "... my Repentance seem'd to be only the Consequence of my Misery, as my Misery was of my Crime" (II, 160). That was the danger of a hardened condition: One might lose all sensitivity to Providence's "invisible hand."

Looking back on his life, Colonel Jack realized that Providence had had an overall plan. The first wife sinned, was caught and transported. Then Jack's agent bought her and put her to work on the plantation. When Jack saw her and was kind to her, she was grateful and penitent. As a result, Colonel Jack resolved to marry her, for it seemed "that Providence had, as it were, cast her upon me again ..." (II, 96). Providence had intervened in Captain Jack's life also. When the two Jacks lodged at an inn, the Colonel overheard a man asking about them and the stolen horse they were riding. Then the man rode on. Because the stranger inquired at the wrong inn, Jack concluded, "... the Case is plain, our Hour was not come, our Fate had determin'd other Things for us, and we were to be reserv'd for it ..." (I, 109). A few days

later the Captain nearly drowned near Lauderdale, Scotland: "... he had a Proverb in his Favour, and he got out of the Water, tho' with Difficulty enough, not being born to be drown'd ..." (I, 118; the italics are mine). Moll could have explained: his "Measure was not yet fill'd up" (I, 19). When Providence allowed a man to suffer, it was merely to accomplish a larger design, to bring good out of evil. The tutor summarized the principle: "... the Wonders of that merciful Providence, which when it has Mercy in Store for a Man [the first wife, Captain Jack, and the tutor, for instance], often brings him into the Briars, into Sorrow and Misery for lesser Sins; that Men may be led to see how they are spar'd from the Punishment due to them, for the greater Guilt which they know lies upon them ..." (I, 199).

The rogue histories illustrated both the inadequacies of the educational system and the subsequent results. For instance, Bob Singleton "had no Sense of Virtue or Religion ... except what a good old Person had said ... when he was a Child of about Eight or Nine Years old..." (p. 8). That was the extent of his inadequate early education. As a result, he was a wicked sailor with no meaningful aspirations until a kindly ship's gunner filled his head "with aspiring thoughts ...." Bob responded heartily to the gunner's lessons in mathematics and geography. In fact, on the next page, the men selected Singleton as their leader. Armed with useful knowledge, he was no longer just another seaman but "Captain Bob" (pp. 68-9).

Jack's education consisted of a word of criticism, the glasshouse proprietor reprimanding a man for cursing; a word of advice, the same businessman lauding honesty; and a fearful scene, seeing Captain Jack

beaten for picking pockets (I, 71-2; I, 187; I, 13). With the effect of these lessons and a single dream, to be a gentleman, he scorned the general "raking and vice," did not curse, returned a poor woman's money, kept only what he needed when he robbed someone, and finally joined the army to rise above this life of poverty and forced wickedness. Considering Jack's "surprising rectitude of principle," Defoe remarked, "Had he come into the World with the Advantage of a virtuous Education, and been instructed how to improve the generous Principles he had in him, what a Figure might he not have made, either as a Man, or a Christian" (I, vii).

Moll's first few years were spent with a wandering gypsy band. Even though her subsequent education seemingly prepared her for service, those early years of ignorance and idleness apparently had already molded her basic character. Bishop Fleetwood would have pointed knowingly to what happened in Moll's adolescence (see f. 38). Unwilling to be put out to service, Moll was pampered by amused gentlefolk. While she lived with the gentry, she received the type of education which the daughters of her wealthy patrons received. The result was unfortunate; Moll became one of those whom Fleetwood referred to: "better educated than provided for."

Roxana had an education (II, 4) and a suitable provision. However, she was a living testimonial to the fact that one cannot easily abandon a "soft" style of life once one has grown accustomed to it or, more specifically, when one is inclined to such a life in the first place. When her spendthrift first husband deserted her, genteel attainments were useless and poverty blinded her to Providential intervention. For a

period of two years she despaired, never seeking employment. Ideally a knowledge of the world and an accurate estimation of her situation would have enabled her to subsist. Surely such endeavor would have maintained her until Providence supplied another husband.

While the failures of Roxana and Moll, schooled in aristocratic graces, are understandable, the errors of Jack's tutor are almost unforgivable: "... when a Man, furnished with such Learning, falls into such Crimes, he is more inexcusable than other Men; because his Learning recommending him, he could not want advantages, and had the less Temptation to Crimes" (I, 194). The educated did not always succeed, but without an education a man didn't have a chance. One might say about the characters in Defoe's England, "Heredity determined what they could become; their environment determined what they did become." Education was the cornerstone of that environment.

However, when the nobility and middle-class gentry had provided proper care and suitable formal education, they had not fulfilled all of their responsibility. In the Poor Men's Plea, a treat supporting the Puritan reform movement of the 1690's, Defoe argued,

Thus the kings and the gentry which first again degenerated from that strict observation of moral virtues, and from thence carried Vice on to that degree it now appears in. From the Court vice took its progress into the country; ... and we the poor Commons, who have always been easy to be guided by the example of our landlords and gentlemen, have really been debauch'd into vice by their examples (The Poor Men's Plea [1698] in Shakespeare Head Ed., p. 6).

Roxana's extravagant entertainments for the Court and the nobility offer a graphic illustration of the corrupting examples set by those people for the nation. Even Roxana properly labeled the corruption: "... it is no Slender upon the courtiers, to say, they were as wicked as any-body

in reason could desire them: The King had several Mistresses .... If the Sovereign gave himself a Loose, it cou'd not be expected the rest of the Court shou'd be all saints ...<sup>u</sup> (I, 201). Pliable Moll was the victim of a young lusty gentleman. On the other hand, the tradesman who operated the glasshouse exerted a positive influence upon Jack's life. Thus the one illustrated the negative effect of gentry upon Commoner; the latter demonstrated the possible good effect. What the gentility did, as well as what they said, was all the education many young ruffians would have.

A well-educated youngster understood how to amass wealth, how to preserve that financial security when he had obtained it, and why Providence influenced his affairs. However, he had two more lessons to learn: when to quit accumulating and how to make amends for his errors.

Sir Robert Clayton taught Roxana, the prudent mistress, how to retire comfortably. She had an annual income of 2,000<sup>l</sup>. Therefore, he suggested that she limit her expenditures to 1,000<sup>l</sup> a year. If she invested the remainder, she would double her savings in ten years. By this method "if the Gentlemen of England would but act so, every Family of them would encrease their Fortunes to a great Degree ... whereas now, says Sir Robert, by the Humour of living up to the Extent of their Fortunes, and rather beyond, the Gentlemen, says he, ay, and the Nobility too, are, almost all of them, Borrowers, and all in necessitous Circumstances<sup>u</sup> (I, 195). Sir Robert's formula resembled the method for retirement which Defoe presented in the Complete English Tradesman. There he argued that when a tradesman has made 20,000<sup>l</sup>, he should retire, let his money collect five per cent interest, and live on his 1,000<sup>l</sup> a year

(II, 86-107).

Singleton and Quaker William began to consider some way of securing their wealth when they were "rich enough." Practical William stated the ideal: "most People leave off Trading when they are satisfied with getting, and are rich enough; for no body trades for the sake of Trading ..." (pp. 309-310). That was the retirement goal, to be rich enough, what Moll described as "a Settlement suitable to my Condition ..." (I, 81). The Governess talked "of leaving off while we were well, and being satisfy'd with what we had got ..." (II, 85), and Roxana knew she ought to "have sat down quiet in Plenty and Honour ..." (I, 185). When Jack cleared 25,000£ in his Mexican trading voyage, he knew "Now was my Time to have sat still contented with what I had got ..." (II, 138-9). However, only Singleton and William quit when they had attained sufficient wealth: "And it may be said that because of their diligence, dexterity, and enterprise they deserve to keep their profits. Defoe does not excuse their crimes, but he does suggest that there is some virtue in the openness of their activities and in their repentance."<sup>45</sup> The rogue's retirement goal, stated simply, was "Quit when you have enough! and quit while you are ahead!"

Moll and Jemy persisted in their trades, were captured, imprisoned, sentenced, and sent to the colonies. Also transported as a criminal, Jack's first wife remarried Jack. Then he pursued foolish, speculative trading ventures, learned his lesson, and returned to England. Jack's wife, as well as Moll and Jemy, eventually returned to England also and lived in prosperous repentance, the moderate retirement Defoe had proposed. Unlike Singleton and William, they had to stumble before they



practiced what they knew to be right. Moll and Jack acquired "enough," tried unsuccessfully to acquire much more, were imprisoned or exiled, realized their error, and retired. Roxana's life differed. She acquired enough, then added more than enough, married her Dutch husband, retired and then received punishment for her life of vice, "a dreadful course of Calamities ... the very Reverse of our former Good Days ..." (II, 160). Unlike the rest of Defoe's characters, she "is guilty of the sin of luxury."<sup>46</sup> She had learned how to invest, but it was not a moderate retirement, nor was it done with the openness of Singleton and William. As a result, her sins haunted her (in the person of an illegitimate daughter, Susanna, whom Roxana was willing to help only at a distance). The furtive ex-prostitute suffered; she was "afraid to look out-of-Doors" while she lodged in London (II, 151). Excessive accumulation and a refusal to openly acknowledge her guilt marred her retirement.

Avarice caused many to continue to accumulate after they should have retired: "Lamenting the number of tradesmen who came out of retirement to ruin themselves in the South Sea Bubble, Defoe asks what but 'meer Avarice' could keep a man working after he is secure for life."<sup>47</sup> For some, making money became a way of life, unnecessary but habitual. Robert Alter likens "Moll's persistence in her career of crime ... to the familiar case of the business man who cannot bring himself to retire from his business even when he has made more money than he can use, because profit-making has become for him the only meaningful activity in life."<sup>48</sup> Mark Schorer erroneously calls Moll Flanders "an anatomy ... of the middle class striving for survival."<sup>49</sup> But Moll explained, "... as Poverty brought me in, so Avarice kept me in, till there was no going

back ..." (II, 17-8). The truth was that "covetousness, rather than narrow circumstances, becomes her sole motivation. From the first she had been legally guilty; now the moral blame too is entirely hers."<sup>50</sup>

The female rogues' lives clearly illustrated the acknowledged psychology of the period: that avarice proceeded from a fear of poverty. However, both Moll and Roxana admitted that their accumulation of wealth was only spurred initially by circumstance. In fact, Roxana's admission closely paralleled Moll's: "Necessity first debauch'd me and Poverty made me a Whore at the Beginning; so excess of Avarice for getting Money ... continued me in the Crime ..." (II, 5). Her "excess of Avarice" created "a standing Monument of ... how ill our Passions guide us; and how dangerously we act, when we follow the Dictates of an ambitious Mind" (I, 187-8). Robert Alter concludes, "The acquisition of wealth, when the individual has no responsibility to anything beyond acquisition itself, can quickly become an activity of pure depredation."<sup>51</sup> But the error involved more even than plunder; it damaged one's self: "... all the Sorrows and Anxieties of Men's Lives come about ... from their restless Cares of keeping it when they got it" (Colonel Jack, I, 46). Avarice precipitated most of the "sorrows and anxieties" of the rogues' lives: Roxana's calamities, Moll's imprisonment, and Jack's exile. If they had sensibly retired, how different their lives could have been!

When an individual had financial security, he could begin his most important task, repentance. But could these avaricious tradesmen repent? Mark Schorer does not think so,

Defoe's announced purpose is probably a pious humbug and he probably meant us to read the book [Moll Flanders] as a series of scandalous events .... The book becomes indeed a vast joke ... and, like, all

tall tales, an absurdity. Yet it is not nearly so absurd as that other absurdity that Defoe did not intend at all, the notion that Moll could live a rich and full life of crime, and by mere repentance, emerge spotless in the end, a perfect matron.<sup>52</sup>

As the character's comments revealed, this life was not all drudgery and anxiety. In spite of the poverty and anxiety which they sometimes experienced, they had fun too. Roxana talked of putting "an End to all the intriguing Part of my Life ..." (II, 54). Elsewhere she spoke of suppressing conscience "in the Pursuit of agreeable crime, and in the possessing of those Pleasures which we are loth to part with" (II, 5). Jack looked back on "a long ill-spent Life, bless'd with infinite Advantage ..." (II, 151-2), and William told Bob that "the present Time was the Time of Enjoyment, but that the Time of Account approached ..." (p. 320). The characters had maintained a sensitivity to life. This responsiveness argues strongly for their ability not only to experience joy for their successes but also sorrow for their sins. There was a seemingly inordinate amount of crying in Colonel Jack, "at least twenty-five references to 'crying' and six more references to tears and intense states of grief."<sup>53</sup> To be sure, such profuse sorrow may seem ludicrous. However, Jack's sorrowing occurred, for instance, after his wife died and when he discovered he had robbed a destitute elderly lady. Nor did Moll's laments seem less sincere when she was destitute and unbefriended. James Sutherland summarizes the rogues' possibility of repentance in an introduction he wrote for the text of Moll Flanders:

As Moll grows old in crime, Defoe is concerned to show us how her moral arteries harden, and it may now be objected, more plausibly than ever, that such a woman would no longer be capable of the tenderness and moral scruples that Moll continues from time to time to show. But to say that is to have too rigid a conception of human character .... Moll has the inconsistency that comes

from being alive; she lives for the moment, and she changes with circumstance.<sup>54</sup>

Furthermore, the only fair view of Defoe's characters would seem to be one which considers what he and his age thought about sin and repentance. Ian Watt explains,

We cannot today believe that so intelligent a man as Defoe should have viewed either his heroine's economic attitudes or her pious protestations with anything other than derision. Defoe's other writings, however, do not support this belief, and it may be surmised that the course of history has brought about in us powerful and often unconscious predispositions to regard certain matters ironically which Defoe and his age treated seriously .... For instance, the view that protestations of piety are suspect anyway, especially when combined with a great attention to one's own economic interest. But ... [Defoe] was not ashamed to make economic self-interest his major premise about human life; he did not think such a premise conflicted either with social or religious values; and nor did his age.<sup>55</sup>

When Singleton became aware of his errors, he too questioned whether God, "if he be a righteous Judge," would "let us escape thus with the Plunder ..." (p. 321). But Quaker William knew that all men were sinners and that mercy was necessary for every man: "... if we consider the Justice of God, we have no Reason to expect any Protection, but as the ordinary Ways of Providence are out of the common Road of human affairs, so we may hope for Mercy still upon our Repentance ..." (pp. 321-2). The minister who visited Moll in Newgate proclaimed the same gospel; he "drew out such a Scheme of infinite Mercy, proclaimed from Heaven to Sinners of the greatest Magnitude that he left me nothing to say, that look'd like despair or doubting of being accepted ..." (II, 115). Defoe and his contemporaries believed that "since repentance was a spiritual gift of God which need be made only once, the death-bed repentance would be accepted by God as a true act of remorse: 'He will

receive us, however late, and by whatever necessity or distress we are driven,' says one of his characters, and although Defoe admitted that the death-bed was not the best place for contrition, he was willing to accept any kind of genuine repentance."<sup>56</sup>

However, sin was a cumulative transgression: "God can be provoked, as one divine expresses it, 'to give the sinner up to the way of his own heart, and seal his condemnation!'"<sup>57</sup> Moll first mentioned the accumulation when she saw the alcoholics at the Mint, men who were "heaping up more Guilt upon themselves ... making more Work for Repentance," by their continual sinning (I, 64). Referring to herself, she wished as she reminisced that she had "taken warning" from her companions' disaster, "but it could not be, my Measure was not yet fill'd up" (II, 19). Sometimes Moll, the tradesman, added more to her debits than credits in her adventures; when the affair with the Bartholomew Fair gentleman ended, Moll concluded, it "added no great Store to me, only to make more Work for Repentance" (II, 57). Finally, Moll, as well as Jack and Bob, repented, removing themselves from the shaky ground of vice. On the other hand, Roxana did not truly repent. Thus, she could testify that "the Bless of Heaven" (II, 160) penetrated her illusory joys, apparently "giving her up to her own ways."

Repentance was not a casual, hurried experience. The accumulation of error put a distance between man and his salvation. Because of this distance, gentlemen needed time to repent. God could not justifiably require repentance of a necessity-driven individual, but a man who had leisure to repent had only two choices: repent or suffer God's wrath. While Colonel Jack worked as a slave in Virginia, he thanked God because

he had "Leisure to Repent ..." (I, 195). Before Moll's imprisonment, she realized that she "had still leisure to have look'd back upon my Pollies, and have made some Reparation ..." (II, 74). Moll had wasted other opportunities also. For instance, after marrying the bank clerk, she "seem'd landed in a safe Harbour, after the Stormy Voyage of Life past was at an end ..." (I, 203).

But "leisure to repent" was only that, a time of rest from the world's cares, unless God provided grace at that moment. Sometimes the individual had no option. That was Moll's problem before her imprisonment: "O! Had I even now had the Grace of Repentance, I had still Leisure ..." (II, 74). Jack explained the process: "Here (I say) I had leisure to Repent [during his exile in Mexico] , how far it pleases God to give the Grace of Repentance where he gives the Opportunity of it, is not for me to say of my self; it is sufficient that I recommend it to all ... that when they find their Lives come up in any Degree to any Similitude of Cases [in other words, when they have leisure, like Jack, to repent] , they will ... ask themselves, Is not this the Time to Repent" (II, 154)? Men had leisure to repent on more than one occasion. Each time they were to inquire, "Is not this the Time to Repent?" Eventually God would provide grace and their life of sin would end. Providence jolted men, urging them to be ready for their opportunities. If they weren't, they might miss the times when grace was afforded.

Men who did not avail themselves of grace early in their lives became hardened. But that "harden'd State and Temper of Soul ... is but a Deprivation of Thought; he that is restor'd to his Thinking, is restor'd to himself" (Moll Flanders, II, 107). Starr adds, "Considera-

tion was commonly regarded as the first step towards repentance, and long discussions of it were extrapolated from Luke 15:17, 'And when he came to himself ....'"<sup>58</sup> This coming-to is described by Moll: "My Temper was touch'd ... and conscious Guilt began to flow in my Mind: In short, I began to think, and to think indeed is one real Advance from Hell to Heaven ..." (II, 107). Defoe used the same terminology when he wrote about Singleton's awakening: "William had struck so deep into my unthinking Temper; with hinting to me, that there was something beyond all this ... viz. Repentance, and that it was high Time to think of it ..." (p. 320).

Being only a first step, thought was a partial repentance (because one acknowledged his sin and experienced some remorse). When Moll lived with her bank-clerk husband, she grieved about her past wickedness. As she reasoned, "Had I gone on here I had perhaps been a true Penitent; but I had an evil counsellor within, and he was continually prompting me to relieve my self by the worst means ..." (II, 6). The first step, thought, had given her an opportunity but only that: "Partial repentance may cause a change in outward behaviour, and given favorable circumstances, such changes may be lasting. But such 'repentance' does not alter, or even interrupt, one's inward decline ... the failure to repent efficaciously of old sins is spiritually equivalent to the commission of new ones. In these terms, then, Moll's five virtuous years do not preclude the continuity of her spiritual decline."<sup>59</sup>

True repentance followed consideration. However, the consideration could not be founded on fear of punishment or vengeance. When the extraordinary lightning struck Captain Bob's ship, he was terribly

frightened, "but not at all feeling any of the moving, softning Tokens of a sincere Penitent, afflicted at the Punishment, but not at the Crime, alarmed at the Vengeance, but not terrfy'd at the Guilt ..." (p. 237). When the storm passed, they "were soon the same irreligious harden'd Crew that ... [they] were before ..." (p. 233). Roxana, the hardened sinner, did not actually repent during a storm either: "I repented of the Crime, but it was of another and lower kind of Repentance, and rather mov'd by my Fears of Vengeance, than from a Sence of being spar'd from being punish'd and landed safe after a Storm" (II, 76-7). When Moll repented in Newgate, "... it was repenting after the Power of farther Sinning was taken away: I seem'd not to Mourn that I had committed such Crimes, and for the Fact, as it was an Offense against God and my Neighbour; but that I was to be punish'd ..." (II, 99). The rogues admitted that these contrite moments were nothing more than false repentance, or more correctly, no repentance.

Weeping, which may have been a symptom of genuine conviction, was more often a misleading sentimentality. While married to the bank clerk, Moll "wept over the Remembrance of past Follies ... and sometimes I flatter'd my self that I had sincerely repented" (I, 203). The tears indicated contrition, but Moll did not continue, thus becoming only a partial penitent. On other occasions, the tears indicated only an ambivalence. For instance, following the theft of the family treasures from the burning house, Moll admitted, "I confess the inhumanity of this Action mov'd me very much, and made me relent exceedingly, and Tears stood in my Eyes upon that Subject; But with all my Sense of its being cruel and Inhuman, I cou'd never find in my Heart to make any Restitution ..."



(II, 22).

Genuine repentance involved a sense of gratitude. As Jack pointed out, "... if it has all been brought to pass by an invisible Hand [Providence] in Mercy to me, what have I been doing? ... That I only should be the most thoughtless, and unthankful of all God's Creatures" (I, 203)! He was not the only ingrate; all sinners were. Furthermore, most men developed an awareness of divine intervention only after a severe jolt. As an illustration, one might be in another man's bed with another man's wife. When Divine Providence sent the husband home, he would beat the culprit severely. That would be Providence chastising him ("whom the Lord loves he chastens") because he erred. If the husband stopped short of killing the offender, that would be Divine Providence sparing him. Repentance should logically follow. To scorn the beating would be to heap up damnation for future judgement. However, an apology and repentance based upon fear of physical or legal retribution would save the physical body but not the soul. If the sinner thanked God for the beating, indicating thought or awareness of Divine Providence intervening to spare his life, then he would be a genuine penitent.

Quaker William included another step in the process of penitence: "... Repentance ... ought to be attended indeed with a deep Abhorrence of the Crime ..." (p. 328). Therefore, Singleton's attitude revealed genuine contrition; he despised the "Mass of ill-gotten Wealth ..." (p. 318). The gentleman of Bath's detestation was directed towards Moll. His reaction also revealed true penitence: "there cannot be a true and sincere Abhorrence of the Offense, and the Love to the Cause of it remain; there will with an Abhorrence of the Sin be found a Detestation of the

fellow Sinner ..." (I, 129). The step abolished love of money and love of partners in crime.

This abhorrence precipitated another step, restitution, a phase which further tested the sincerity of the penitent. However, restoring everything to the original owners was impossible, impractical, and unnecessary. The thief did not know all of those whom he had robbed. Furthermore, "it is questionable whether any of the former thefts were real crimes since they were committed in accordance with the laws of nature [according to Defoe, a man cannot force himself to starve] , and then, to return all the money would restore ... [the individual] to the same state of necessity as before."<sup>60</sup> William explained the thief's obligation, to have "a Resolution to do what Right with it we are able; and who knows what Opportunity Providence may put into our Hands, to do Justice at least to some of those we have injured, so we ought at least to leave it to him, and go on, as it is, without doubt, our present Business to do" (p. 322). The key then was a willingness to make restitution even if the actual act never became necessary.

Repentance necessitated considerable mental exertion on the part of the penitent. For instance, Moll's Governess "sent for a minister too ... and apply'd herself with such earnestness by his assistance to the Work of a sincere Repentance ..." (II, 112). At the end of their lives, Moll and Jemmy "come over to England also, where we resolve to spend the Remainder of our years in sincere Penitence, for the wicked Lives we have lived" (II, 175). To be sure, Defoe had said in the introduction, "they came both to England again, after about eight Years, in which time they were grown very Rich, and where she liv'd it seems, to

be very old; but was not so extraordinary a Penitent, as she was at first ..." (I, xi). This slackening "follows a return to the Old World, however, and is qualified by the remark that 'indeed she always spoke with abhorrence of her former life, and of every part of it' [I, xi]. Although the completeness of her regeneration is called into question, the genuineness of her conversion is not."<sup>61</sup>

An individual who did not continue to "work" endangered his business before he was a gentleman and placed his soul in peril after his conversion. This, then, was man's last temporal goal. Born in want and in sin, he needed an education compounded of economic virtues and spiritual awareness. Then he struggled to extricate himself from his insecure economic status so that he would be able to retire and to have "leisure to repent." His first work provided financial security. Then he developed genteel attainments, a secondary concern which provided social security. Finally he asked, "Is this not time to repent?" When God provided the grace and he expended the effort, he had attained spiritual security, the prerequisite to eternal bliss.

The secure man was an English gentleman, probably a retired tradesman with wise investments, genteel accomplishments, an eye for reform, and an oft-used prayer closet. It is the "prosperous repentance" Moll, Jack, and Bob enjoyed and from which the "Blast of Heaven" removed Roxana.

## NOTES

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THE MORAL PURPOSE OF DEFOE'S ROGUE HISTORIES:  
COLONEL JACK, CAPTAIN SINGLETON, MOLL FLANDERS,  
THE FORTUNATE MISTRESS (ROXANA)

by

CLAYTON LOUIS KAUPP

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AN ABSTRACT OF A MASTER'S REPORT

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In his rogue histories Daniel Defoe reduced fundamental ethics to a simple formula: "be genteel." For the early eighteenth century novelist gentility implied education, economic security, social adeptness, an interest in reform, and a pious and prosperous retirement. The direct result would be ideal individuals, and the ultimate outcome would be a Utopian England.

The rogue histories relate heroes' and heroines' struggles precipitated by an education which was inadequate or misguided, by poverty or the fear of poverty, or by the influence of others, either evil associates or scheming superiors. All of the characters had a problem at the conclusion of their struggles too. Avarice or vanity compelled Jack, Moll, and Roxana; they didn't retire when they should have and dire consequences followed. Bob's suffering resulted from a disquietude about restitution of his piratical earnings and repentance for his errors.

The education of Defoe's rogues reveals even more clearly what he hoped to suggest to the reader. First, he used examples: the tradesman-sportsman and the gentleman thief provided the negative aspects. The former erred because they violated fundamental economics, expenditures exceeded income. The latter deserved censure because their conduct was not honorable. Economics was a basic consideration but character was important too. And there were positive examples: the true-bred merchant, the gentleman soldier, and the gentleman planter, men who amassed their wealth, improved their social status, and retired in luxury and with repentant hearts.

Defoe advocated honesty, gratitude, courage, and mercy, all regulated by utility. No man, he reasoned, could willingly accept starvation

or the fear of starvation. Nevertheless, virtues were important, and the would-be gentility cultivated them. When Christian conduct was economically feasible, it was strongly urged. However, one must have a proper appreciation of economic realities.

Equipage, suitable apparel, and a loving wife were "the next articles." But dangers attended these additions: excessive spending or luxurious living, alcoholism, dueling, and an overabundance of passion, either before or after marriage. Here also Defoe moralized. For instance, Roxana stopped in the middle of an amorous encounter to advise gentlemen to beware of amorous encounters.

Universal gentility, as well as individual conduct, concerned Defoe also. He frequently advocated reforms which would enable all to achieve the desired status. Prison reforms, homes for unwed mothers, and better schools, including education for women were changes he advocated.

Finally, he envisioned the aged following the pattern of Moll, Jack, and Bob, remorseful about their necessary sins, willing to make restitution, and endeavoring to live a life of good conduct in wealthy retirement. A man who retired when he "had enough," sponsored reforms, developed attributes of character, arrayed himself handsomely and prayed often was Defoe's ideal, the complete English gentleman, an ideal he advocated in his rogue histories.